

STYLISH APPEARANCE
ON PAGE B12

THE NEW YORK TIMES
30 January, 1985

CBS Witness Says General Used 'Political Power'

J By M. A. FARBER

Ronald L. Smith, a former Vietnamese affairs analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency, testified yesterday that he believed Gen. William C. Westmoreland used his "political power" in 1967 to impose a "grossly misleading" estimate of enemy strength on the C.I.A.

The estimate — half the 500,000 to 600,000 advocated by the C.I.A. — was incorporated into the official military listing of enemy strength known as the order of battle and was reported to President Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a special, 25-page assessment in November 1967.

Mr. Smith said he believed the estimate for enemy strength successfully advanced by representatives of General Westmoreland's command were "improper, incorrect and inadequate." Mr. Smith added that the C.I.A.'s "capitulation" to the military's position on the question was "morally unacceptable."

With regard to General Westmoreland, he said, "It was wrong both from a procedural point of view of not allowing the professional intelligence people to do their work unencumbered and, secondly, it was wrong to use the political power he had at the time to force the thing down our throats."

Mr. Smith appeared in Federal District Court in Manhattan as the sixth witness for CBS in the trial of General Westmoreland's \$120 million libel suit.

The suit stems from a 1982 CBS documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," that accused the general's command in Saigon of engaging in a "conspiracy" to show progress in the war by understating the size and nature of North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces in South Vietnam in the year before the Tet offensive of January 1968.

The thesis of the 90-minute program was based largely on 15 years of re-

search by Samuel A. Adams, a 51-year old former C.I.A. analyst who took part in the dispute over enemy strength in 1967. Mr. Adams was a paid consultant for the broadcast and is now a defendant in this trial.

Mr. Smith, who retired from the C.I.A. last month after 26 years of service, was, in 1967 and 1968, head of the South Vietnam branch of the agency's Office of Economic Research in Langley, Va. Mr. Adams joined Mr. Smith's branch in January, 1968, after resigning in protest from another C.I.A. unit that he felt had been "compromised" in its estimates of enemy strength by "pressures" from the military.

The head of that unit, George A. Carver Jr., testified for General Westmoreland last November that Mr. Adams was "very prone to jump to conclusions and very intolerant of people who did not share the conclusions to which he jumped."

Praise for C.I.A. Analyst

But, yesterday, Mr. Smith described Mr. Adams as "one of the finest analysts that I ever worked with."

David Boies, the lawyer for CBS, then recalled that Mr. Adams had been portrayed as "a mental case" in a CBS interview in 1981 with Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, a retired director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, an arm of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Q. Did you see any evidence of that?

Mr. Smith smiled.

A. No, I did not see any evidence of it and it would be hard for me to speculate as to why anyone would say that.

General Westmoreland, who commanded American forces in Vietnam between January 1964 and June 1968, contends the CBS documentary defamed him by saying he had lied to President Johnson and the Joint Chiefs.

The program said that, as part of a "conscious effort" to minimize esti-

mates of enemy strength, General Westmoreland had ordered the removal of the Vietcong's self-defense forces from the order of battle and refused to permit their inclusion in the special assessment for the President. Those forces were newly estimated in 1967 at 120,000 — an increase on paper, if not in the field, of about 50,000.

General Westmoreland testified he dropped the self-defense forces from the order of battle because he decided they were insignificant militarily and could not be counted precisely and because their inclusion at a higher number would only be confusing.

But Mr. Smith said yesterday he was not aware of any intelligence that "justified that position." He said the size of the Tet offensive "strongly confirmed that the base of enemy strength was larger than that depicted" in the assessment for the President.

Although that assessment did not contain a 1967 figure for the self-defense forces, it noted that in early 1966 their number was "on the order of 150,000."

Like some other witnesses for CBS, Mr. Smith said that, after the Tet offensive, the C.I.A. estimated that North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam in the five months before the attack had been 20,000 to 30,000 a month — quadruple the rate reported by General Westmoreland's command.

Infiltration Rate Left to Military

Before the Tet offensive, Mr. Smith testified, the C.I.A. had left the determination of infiltration to the military. And "most certainly," he said, the command in Saigon had been in a position to know of the higher rate.

The documentary, on which Mr. Smith did not appear, asserted that, in the fall of 1967, the command had "systematically blocked" reports by its own officers of a high infiltration — leaving the President and American

STAT

STAT

STAT

Continued

forces "totally unprepared" for the size of the Tet offensive.

As on Monday, Judge Pierre N. Leval reminded the jury the "truth" issue in the case was not whether the command's figures on infiltration or other aspects of enemy strength were "accurate or inaccurate," but whether they were made "honestly."

Mr. Smith, who is recovering from a medical ailment, was excused before lunch yesterday, and will return to the stand this morning.

Brief Cross-Examination

In a brief cross-examination, David M. Dorsen, a lawyer for General Westmoreland, pressed Mr. Smith on whether he "personally knew" that senior aides to President Johnson considered the estimates on enemy strength in 1967 to be "misleading."

Mr. Dorsen singled out four aides who have testified for General Westmoreland — Robert S. McNamara, the Secretary of Defense; Paul H. Nitze, Deputy Secretary of Defense; Walt W. Rostow, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and William P. Bundy, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.

Mr. Smith said he had not discussed the figures with any of those officials.

During the afternoon Mr. Boies read into the record portions of pretrial depositions from John Moore, a former C.I.A. analyst in Saigon, and Col. William Cover, a former military intelligence officer in Vietnam.

Mr. Moore said he believed there had been a "conspiracy" by the military to "suppress" the true strength of the enemy. Colonel Cover said that, after he returned to the United States from Saigon, he found it "hard to believe" the optimistic reports he read regarding the course of the war.

"Following the Tet offensive," he said, "I concluded that the rosy glow coming across the Pacific had been a false dawn."